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COORDINATION

For the mission of the National Vaccine Program (NVP) to be accomplished, it is essential that there be effective coordination of the one dozen or more participating Federal agencies (see figure 9 for a summary of their involvement in each of the four major goals of the National Vaccine Plan).

The principal coordinating organization for the NVP is the National Vaccine Program Office (NVPO), within the Public Health Service (PHS). The NVPO's responsibilities include providing overall leadership for the collaborative effort and monitoring the progress being made in achieving the plan's goals. Within the PHS, the NVPO has the task of reviewing all budget requests associated with vaccine development and immunization programs to ensure that all major priorities are adequately covered and that there is no duplication of effort.

Various entities participate in the process of guiding and coordinating NVP activities. For example, the National Vaccine Advisory Committee (NVAC) (composed of nongovernmental experts in vaccine development and immunization) provides overall advice on vaccine development and immunization, as specified under P.L. 99-660. As of January 1994, NVAC subcommittees are addressing a variety of key issues, such as:

- barriers to immunization at the State and local levels;
- adult immunization;
- characteristics desirable in "future vaccines," such as the timing of doses and potential for combination or coadministration, that should be considered in vaccine development planning;
- immunization registries; and
- vaccine safety.

Two formal mechanisms exist for coordinating Federal activity. The NVP Interagency Group includes those agencies with major vaccine-related responsibilities specifically mentioned in P.L. 99-660, and the Interagency Committee on Immunization (ICI) includes all those Federal departments and agencies involved in immunization (see appendix 3). Each of these groups meets regularly to supplement day-to-day information exchange, and coordination, cooperation, and planning that is facilitated by the NVPO staff.

In addition, the NVPO coordinates special cross-agency initiatives that are undertaken from time to time on specific topics of importance or other identified needs. Currently, for example, the NVPO is working on a planning initiative that will lead to an improved national response to pandemic influenza and on the transfer of technology from Federal agencies to the private sector to promote vaccine development. In addition, the NVPO is responsible for convening PHS experts and outside consultants to provide scientific advice to the Department of Agriculture on the public health issues related to the use of veterinary vaccines.

Implementation of vaccination programs, as a public health measure, is the statutory responsibility of the States. Therefore, coordination between Federal agencies and State and territorial health agencies is also essential. Traditionally this task has been predominately undertaken by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as the main agency providing financial and technical assistance on immunization to the States. With the increasing role of social service programs as vehicles to promote immunization, coordination needs are